THE

EVIDENCE;

OR,

Religious and Moral Gazette.

RELIGION AND MORALITY ARE THE BASIS OF HUMAN FELICITY.

VOL. I.] JANUARY 2, 1808. [No 47

THE DUTY AND IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING CHILDREN.

Proverbs, 22, 6.—*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

SUPPOSING on a cold winters day, you should visit a family where there was a number of small children, pining with hunger and quivering for the want of covering; and you should look about for the parents and presently find them in a different apartment, in the midst of elegance ease and plenty, faring sumptuously and richly clad, with their table spread with delicous dainties, and their cup overflowing with the choicest wines, would not your blood curdle within you, and your soul rise in indignation that parents, thus circumstanced, should be deaf to the agonizing shrieks of their children pleading for a piece of bread; and would you not be ready to pronounce them devoid of all natural affection, and in cruelty, vastly surpassing savage barbarity itself?

OR supposing you should go into a place where the attention of children was universally excited to the concerns of their souls, supposing, at the same time, you should see them exceedingly anxious to know what they must do to be saved; so that they should hang upon their parents with the utmost solicitude to receive instruction from them about Jesus and the way of life; but notwithstanding all the importunities and tears of the children expressive of the deepest distress imaginable, the partents, totally regardless and indifferent to their situation, should be wholly immersed in the common business of life, would you not suppose these parents, in such case, awfully stupid, and destitute of those emotions of heart, which filial entreaty would be calculated to inspire? And could you, in such situation refrain yourselves from condoling with these children that their solicitude should meet such passive indifference, from those, to whose aid they were entitled, by all the ties of parental obligation and affection? Yes, you would be perfectly surprised that parents could possess such hearts of ice, surrounded with so much to overcome and melt them into compassion. But my brethern, have you not greater occasion to be moved with sensibility, and aroused to earnest solicitude for your children when you behold them neglectful of their eternal interests, when you see them suspended on the silken cord without hope and without God in the world, and liable every moment, to be snatched from you, and hurried before their judge! Amid such circumstances, is not every motive portrayed in living colors too engaging to be resisted, by those of

you, who believe your children to have been given to you of God, to be given to him again. Especially, will parents shrink from a duty dictated by natural affection, and enforced by divine authority together with all those encouragements annexed, which are contained in this unequivocal passage; "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

In this portion of scripture parental obligation is urged, and encouragment is subjoined to the faithful performance of obligation, every way calculated to excite pious sensibility and invite to action. That the minds of parents might be duly impressed with the subject, I shall,

1. Shew that children are capable of being trained in the ways they should go.

2. That it is the duty of parents to train their children in the way they should go.

3. Point out the best means to effect the object. And

4. Hold out the motives and encouragements to excite parents to engage in the duty.

1. I Shall shew that children are capable of being trained in the way they should go.

Children are possessed of rational and moral existence. This is true, as soon as the breath of life. If it were not so, they never would advance in moral and intellectual improvements and become men. The way that a child arrives to manhood is by growth, and not by the creation of any new faculty.

A child is a man in minature. Some suppose that a child in the early stage of life is possessed of only a part of the faculties which constitute a man. They conceive that the soul including the understanding and will, are either, the effect of a new creative act, or acquired from objects about them. Others are of the opinion, that infants are possessed of some degree of rationality, originally, but of no moral faculty on which either virtue or vice can be possibly predicated; and that this faculty is acquired, in some subsequent period, before which they are neither sinful nor holy.

To both of these theories, I conceive, there are very serious objections. The first appears to be both unreasonable and unscriptural.

It does not appear reasonable to imagine, that God would make a creature belonging to a certain species or class of beings without endowing it with those faculties appertaining to its own class. There is no more difficulty in conceiving all the faculties to come into life at one and the same time; than in supposing that they come into existence successively, and what makes it evident and certain that the soul is as early as the breath of life, is that the soul united to the body is essental to animal existence. Take away the soul from the human body, and life instantly ceases. If then animal life in a man implies a soul united to it, and that necessarily, then the supposition, that the body of a child lives and grows for some indefinite period of time, before the soul exists, is absurd and unreasonable. For if the creature can breath and walk, before the soul is in the body, no reason can be given, that the separation of the soul from the body in an after period would put on end to animal life. If a child can exist ten or twenty days without a soul, no reason can be giv-

en why it may not exist without as many years. Reason is evidently against this theory.

THE notion, that the child acquires the soul by sensasion from objects around it has nothing to sustain it. If we should undertake to defend this opinion we must suppose, that the soul consists of material substance, and is consequently corruptible, or that bodily organization, by the aid of objects presented, produces spirit; both of which suppositions are inadmissible; the first attaches thought to matter, the other attributes to it creative power, which belongs to God only.

THE theory which teaches that children exist during an indefinite period without any degree of understanding and will, is also unscriptural.

THERE is nothing in the scriptures either expressed or implied which in the least countenances the sentiment, but the whole tenor of the bible goes to prove the contrary. When God created man he breathed into him the breath of life, and man became a living soul. From this passage it is evident, that the soul was as early in man as the breath of life. Their commencement implied each other, and was coexistent. The other theory, that the child in infancy has some degree of intellect, or rationality, and that the moral character, or faculties are subsequent, is equally objectionable. Adam never existed a moment without a moral character, he was made upright, or holy. And if he begat a son in his own likeness, then it will follow that all his posterity have moral character, as well as rationality in the first stage of animal existance.

GOD'S treatment to children, proves. that they have in some low degree all the faculties of mind as adults. The seal of circumcission, placed on children at eight days old, proved that these children had moral character, and that they were capable of an internal change by the spirit of God. There could have been no meaning in circumcising a child, only as the seal imported, the capability and necessity of the subject's receiving internal circumcission upon the heart. These circumcised children were in covenant with God, but if they had no rational and moral existence, we might say that any of the utensils used in sacrafice were in covenant with him, as well as they. Beside if children have no rational and moral existence in their infancy. then there is no possibility of their future ixistence, and of course they cannot be saved. For if they have no mind, no understanding, no will, then there is nothing to save, and therefore death must put an end to their existence. But God in his word teaches us differently from this. For in the resurrection great and small will be reanimated, and assembled at the judgement seat. Christ when he was on earth, witnessed to the rational and moral existance of children, by taking them into his arms and blessing them, and by recognizing the children of believing parents as members of his kingdom.

IF we allow ourselves to reflect soberly and judiciously upon this subsect, we may be easily convinced, that there is nothing incredible in the nature of the case, that little infants may have all those faculties of soul possessed by adults. It is true, that the mind must be small, as well as the bodily organs weak, so that there can be little or no appearance of volition or thought by any external actions, yet this is far from proving that they have no

mind, no thought. So soon as the organization acquires some more energy, then the mind, including both understanding and will begins to discover itself by actions. This may well lead us to conclude, that the mind as really existed before such discovery was made, as after.

The general anology of the animal world confirms this opinion. When we trace the various classes of animals, we find their young ones endowed with a nature similar to each species, to which they respectively belong. The serpent, or the wolf in the first period of existence, has each a distinct nature, and both materially differ from the lamb. The young of all the numerous classes of animals have each a separate nature which by increase, brings them to the full stature and similitude of those from which they sprung. The same anology extends to the human race. Little children tho' feeble, and incapable of taking any care of themselves, are yet capable of growth and improvement, as respects each and every faculty of body and mind, till they arrive to their full stature, and strength in all their several faculties.

This shews us that children are made with minds capable of improvement. And as they are made capable of intellectual and moral improvement, so they are capable of being trained in the way they should go. The mind when young is flexible and easily impressed, and it may be managed with less difficulty, than after it has become settled in a certain course of pursuit.

After a person has arrived to years and become rigidly fixed in his habits of life, it is next to an impossibility, ordinarily, to swerve him from the line he has been pursuing. Tho' you may use arguments with such an one, which are conclusive and convincing to him, yet they will rarely take effect; the truth is the time is pretty much past to undertake to train him; he is not capable of being trained.

To make a person expert in almost any handy craft occupation, he must be taken and put to the trade young. If this is put off to a late period, he cannot be trained, so as ever to become expert and skilful in his occupation.

If the period of youth is watched and the child is taken at a suitable age and placed under a skilful artist, who is faithful in communicating the necessary instructions, there is reason to expect he will become master of the business of his calling. And because he is of an age peculiarly favorable to being trained.

Now children in a moral view are very similar to this. They are capable of being trained almost as you would have them, at least ordinarily.

If the parent's heart is supremely attached to God, and he has entered into covenant with him, that he will devote himself and his children to the Lord forever, and uniformly trains them to walk in his holy ways the means are extremely apt to take effect. Experience confimrs the sentiment. And this shews us that children are capable of being not only trained, but trained in the way they should go. This leads me to observe in the

2. Place, that it is the duty of parents to train their children in the way they should go.

The minds of children as well as their bodies, are committed to the charge and direction of their pa-

ents. It seems to be one of the first laws of nature that parents should act for their children and seek their good as they do their own.

CHILDREN when young are inexperienced. New objects make strong impressions on their minds, and they are liable to be insnared by temptations to their unspeakable injury, and not unfrequently to their utter destruction. And from whom shall children expect an aiding hand to guide them in the way they should go, if not from their parents, to whose control they feel themselves obligated to yield obedience. The duty of parents towards their children is obvious and certain, as it grows out of the close connection subsisting betweeu them.

THIS obligation is not a matter of speculation, it is felt by every one who allows himself to reflect and think soberly. It is a law inscribed upon the conscience, with so deep an impression, that nothing but an effort against nature itself, can obliterate the characters. If then, parents have opportunity to train their children in the way they should go, they must resits the clearest dictates of their own minds, in case they are indifferent to a matter so pressingly necessary.

THE God who made us, whose law is a transcrip of his moral image, has identified parental obligation, and engraved it, with his own finger.

THE text is an instance among many others, in which the duty of parents is asserted by divine authority. God has enjoined the duty, in language too obvious to be misunderstood. In Moses' fareweel address to the Israelites just before his death, is this solmn charge, "And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart and thou shalt teach them diligently, unto thy children, and shall talk of them, when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up."

THE Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, speaks in these words; "Ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

THE scriptures not only abound in passages to this effect, but they present shining examples of parental faithfulness. God bears testimony to the faithful of the earth, which testimony he is pleased to convey down to us, that we might be provoked to emulation, in a matter of so much responsibility. Respecting Abraham the father of the faithful, the Lord expressly declares, "I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham, that which he hath spoken of him."

JOSHUA entered most solmnly and deeply into the subject, and pledges himself to God that he would not overlook the obligations under which he was placed. "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord." The Lord Jesus Christ, recognized parental authority, and the fitness of the divine regulation, by yielding due respect and obedience to his earthly parents. It is said, "he was subject unto them." Now ye who are parents what can you say to justify the neglect of training up your children in the way they should go.

IN the first place you know, they

have minds; they have rational and moral faculties. Their minds are flixible and docile. Your children, in every view are capable of being trained in the way they should go. You cannot therefore, complain, that you have no foundation, on which you can work. You hold a most eligible situation of being inestimable blessings to your rising offspring. You have the outhority of God binding you to parental fidelity. In addition you have examples of the most illustrious of God's people, who, in the amidst of obstasles presented from a thougtless world, chose rather to be singular than to disregard this natural and most rational of all dictates. In no light in which the subject can be placed, can the duty of parents to their children, be shaded with a doubt. God has made it your duty to train children, and to train them right. If you shrink from this obligation, yet, remember, you cannot rise above it. God's authority is supreme and cannot be put down by his creatures. Here then you have a rich field, in which you are invited to labor. You are to train your children that they may be fitted for a higher family than your own, for the family of the ever blessed God. In the faithful performance of this obligation, society, the church of God, and your country have each their claim on you. Do not imagine, that a few instances of rebuke, or only a transient mentioning before your children some of the practices they are to shun, will free you from farther exertions. Training is a constant business. It is not the work of a day. It is an employment of which you are not to grow weary. Neither are you to imagine it is of the most easy performance. It requires all your endeavors and all the light of Gods word to direct you. To meet this duty with an acceptible performance you must engage in it understandingly with a humble heart, looking to God, and taking his word to aid you in the execution of the important trust; a trust of raising an offspring for him, which shall in their turn perpetuate your example to the generation yet unborn.

(To be continued.)

ON THE OPENING YEAR.

Every successive year becoms increasingly interesting to the candidate for immorrality, and especially to those who anticipate immortal bliss. The present time is short, and rapidly hastening to its termination. Ministers are dying, and their hearers are dying all around them. The husband and wife, the parent and child, the master and servant, the prince and subject, are indiscriminately marked out as the prey of all-cenquering death. Let us be wise, and improve the opening year, by reflection on the past, and suitable determination concerning the future periods of life.

What havoc has death made in the past year! he has visited the house of the high as well as the low. The oratorical statesman, the zealous patriot, the hoary counsellor, the lordly prelate have been numbered with the dead. The eminent servant of God, the devoted christian, the troubler of churches, and the slave of satan, have alike been summoned away.—And what have we been doing the past year? Ah my fellow christian? recollect, reconsider your ways, and remember your feelings, that you may be humbled in the dust. But.

Consider what you purpose to do, by the grace of God in future. Do you intend to be more diligent in business, more frugal, more

worldly-minded? And will you not desire and aim to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord? This year thou mayest die. Then set your house in order, and take care that your soul be ready. O what prayer, what watchfulness, what self-denial, what deadness to the world should we testify, if we knew we had the sentence of death in ourselves, and this year was to be our last. Glance for a moment at the supposed character. See how constant he is at private and family prayer. How he reads and loves his bible! How regular at public ordinances! What attention to the word! How he loves a faithful minister! What charity does he feel towards all his fellow-christians! What pity and prayer for poor sinsinners! What subscriptions for the support and spread of the gospel! And finally what repose in the covenant, the grace, and faithfulness of God!

READER! look at the character, and by the help of God, make it thy own. Then "all things are yours;" life and death are yours, and Christ shall be yours for ever!

FIDELIS.

THE DEVOTIONAL REPOSITORY

Mr. Editor,

THE devotions of David, and his contemporary fellow saints, have ever been of eminent use in guiding and assisting the prayers of the children of God. With a view to their benefit, I shall occasionally send you a few reflections, in the hope of illustrating some of those excellent patterns of prayer contained in the book of Psalms. The following is a specimen, which, with your permission, shall be succeded by others, as season and ability may enable me to catch a little of the holy ardour which inspired the hearts of those saints of the Most High.

Yours most cordially,

ADJUTOR.

PSALM IV. 1.

"*Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.*"

LET us observe the expressive term the holy Psalmist makes use of in this petition:—"God of my righteousness." He knew the rectitude and justice of his God, in maintaining his cause against those who "turned his glory into shame," who loved vanity and falsehood, ver. 2. He was perstuaded of the divine goodness and mercy: hence he found gladness of heart flowing from the light of God's countenance, ver. 6, 7. He could also repose on the truth and faithfulness of God; for he knew "that the Lord had set apart him that is godly for himself; and that he would hear when he called upon him, and make him to dwell in safety, verses 6, 7.

Yet remark his fervour, "Hear me when I call." Whatever views he had of the mercy or faithfulness of God, it did not make him lazy and careless in his applications to him. Nor was he satisfyed with praying, unless the Lord heard and answered his prayers. He prayed in faith, and the Lord granted him his request.

Mark, further, his grateful remembrance of past mercy,—Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress." David had heavy sorrows: and often were "the troubles of his heart

enlarged." These seasons he remembered! but he would never forget the seasonableness and greatness of his deliverances. Of these he gratefully reminds the Lord; while from them he pleads future favors.

Observe. finally, the importunate use he makes of past interposition —"Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer." Fully sensible of his sinfulness, he implores mercy. Without this he well knew he should remain helpless, hopeless, and miserable. And hence he sought it with fervour, repeating his application again and again. He knew the mercy he wanted, and therefore with repeated importunity he says,—hear my prayer! But David, at this time, was no stranger to the mercy of God: and hence it seems clear, that he either desired fresh appearances of providence in reference to outward difficulties, or some new manifestation of mercy to his soul. Perhaps he sought both.

A christian may learn much from the model and spirit of this prayer. 1. Fly to God in your distress. His ears are ever open to your cry. 2. Plead his perfections when you are before him. Tell him of his great power, his boundless love, his unalterable faithfulness. 3. Never forget past benefits. Gratefully remind him of what he has done for you, that you may the better plead your present suit. 4. Lie low at at his footstool. When you are there, as freely confess your sins, as you would ask his mercy. 5. Avoid, O christian, all lazy, heartless applications the God who can help you. Be not weary of prayer, and the very heaven of heavens shall open to receive your supplications. And may the Lord hear thee in the day of trouble: the name of the God of Jacob defend thee: the Lord fulfil all thy petitions." Amen.

KNOWLEDGE OF ONE'S SELF.

Let men learn to be affectionate to their friends, faithful to their allies, repectful to superiors, and just even to their enemies: let them be taught to fear death and torments less than the reproach of their own conscience. Did we but know ourselves, how humble it would make us, and happy it would be for us if we did; for, want of knowledge of ourelves, is the cause of pride, and pride was the first cause of our seperation from God; and ignorance of ourselves is the cause of keeping us from coming to him; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Did we know ourselves, we would not be proud. For what is man? a weak and sickly body; a pitiful and helpless creature, exposed to all the injuries of times and fortune; a mass of clay and corruption, prone to evil, and of so perverse and depraved a judgment, as to prize earth above heaven, temporal pleasures before endless felicities. It is not very difficult for men to know themselves, if they took but proper pains to enquire into themselves; but they are more solicitous to be thought what they should be, than really careful to be what they ought to be.

The Hive.

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